

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, June 03, 2008 10:50 AM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani's speech at opening of French Embassy Office in Erbil

Prime Minister's speech at opening of French Embassy Office

Erbil, 1 June 2008

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Dr Bernard Kouchner, Friend and Foreign Minister of France,
Mr Abdul Karim Hashim, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iraq,
Ambassador Jean François Girault, Ambassador of France to Iraq,
Mr Adnan Mufti, Speaker of the Kurdistan National Assembly,
Dr Frederick Tissot, Head of the French Diplomatic Representative Office in our Region;
Consuls, heads of foreign embassy offices to the Kurdistan Region, distinguished guests, good evening and welcome.

Welcome to this ceremony and the opening of the French Diplomatic Representative Office here in the Kurdistan Region.

I am pleased and privileged, on behalf of the people the Kurdistan Region and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), to warmly welcome you, Minister Kouchner, and your accompanying delegation.

Dr Kouchner worked with Doctors Without Borders, Médecins Sans Frontières, and in 1974, when we had no friends but the mountains, he visited the Kurdistan Region for the first time and met with the late General Barzani.

His visit today reminds us of that time when our people faced grave challenges, and when he became a close friend of our people.

The visit by the Foreign Minister of France to our Region would be a special occasion in itself, but with our dear guest Minister Kouchner being the Foreign Minister of France on the one hand and a close friend to our people on the other; it makes it even more special.

Minister Kouchner visited the Kurdistan Region again in the late 1980s as part of the organisation Doctors of the World, Médecins du Monde. At that time, our people faced some of their darkest days, but Dr Kouchner worked hard to offer medical help.

As Dr Kouchner climbed the ranks within his government, he never forgot his friends. During the mass exodus of 1991, he was among the first European politicians who worked to make the world aware of the tragedies that had befallen the Kurdish people.

It was Dr Kouchner who urged the UN to put an end to the mass atrocities against the Kurdish people. He significantly contributed to UN Security Council Resolution 688, which was submitted by France and then adopted by the United Nations Security Council creating a legal basis for the process that led to the protection of nearly two million Kurdish refugees.

Minister Kouchner, we are very happy that today we are meeting you under quite different circumstances. Rest

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assured that your friends here in the Kurdistan Region warmly welcome you and we, as the people of the Kurdistan Region, all express our utmost appreciation and thanks for your tireless efforts. We are honoured by your friendship.

Today's initiative by France is a step towards advancing relations between the people of the Kurdistan Region and the Republic of France. We are very happy that our friendship is being raised to a new level.

When we look at the past we remember the days when our people needed assistance and humanitarian aid from the international community.

Since 1991 we depended on handouts such as food, clothes and shelter, which were provided by our friends and by international humanitarian aid organisations. This noble decision supported us through our hard times.

But today the situation has changed. We in the Kurdistan Region have benefited from the opportunity that was made available to us and we have stepped away from our bitter past.

The humanitarian assistance at that time was very important and valuable to us, but with the liberation of Iraq, the people of the Kurdistan Region rose to the challenge presented to us and we took an active role in the process of rebuilding Iraq.

Today, we are living in a new phase but we continue to need the support of the international community in the process of reconstruction within the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq.

Such participation will have a positive effect on our commitment to the law and the Constitution of the country. This will lead to peace and stability in the region. We know we have a long way to go, but we will continue in our efforts so that we can secure a bright future for our people.

We must benefit from this new stage of relations between France and the Kurdistan Region, both politically and economically. France is in a powerful position as a member to the Security Council and within the European Union. Your country can play an important role in helping us to develop our political process, democratic system and in encouraging French industries and investors to participate in Iraq's reconstruction efforts of Iraq.

We are seeking stronger cultural and educational exchange programmes with France as well. Our students deserve advanced education opportunities like the rest of the world.

We hope that French universities can offer opportunities to the students of the Kurdistan Region to attend annually and be exposed to the latest developments in science and technology.

You are supporting a people that wants to live in peace with itself and with its neighbours; a people that respects human rights and the rule of law, and is making steps towards tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

These changes encourage us to work harder. We want to make up for the years of isolation we suffered in the past. The Kurdistan Region is quite rich and can offer many good opportunities to the international community, especially in the areas of natural resources, agriculture, tourism, construction and infrastructure development.

All of our efforts and activities are in accordance with the rights given to us by the Iraqi Constitution. While oil and gas were a source of pain and suffering in our past, today we are using the law in trying to transform them into sources of prosperity and capability.

We are absolutely committed to dealing with this issue on the condition that we can secure the rights of our people for the future. The position that we have taken is solely and only for the welfare and happiness of the

Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq.

We do not want oil and gas to be the only sources of income for our Region's economy. We want to benefit from all the natural resources from the Kurdistan Region and work to develop all the sectors.

Once again, I commend the Republic of France for deciding to open a diplomatic representative office in the Kurdistan Region. I thank the continuous efforts of the French Ambassador to Iraq and the Head of the Embassy Office here in Erbil.

I thank you for the political and humanitarian support that you have given to us over many years. We have great appreciation for all those French dignitaries who assisted our people in different ways during our most difficult times.

Dear Minister, I would like to assure you that the KRG is ready to provide all the necessary cooperation and support to ensure the success of your Representative Office here in the Kurdistan Region. Undoubtedly, this step is just the beginning of a new stage in our relations. We hope we can mutually benefit from this opportunity to develop bilateral relations and interests.

Once again, welcome to this event and thank you very much.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Holding, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, June 18, 2008 7:13 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani celebrates civil society's achievements

Prime Minister Barzani celebrates civil society's achievements

June 17, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today commended ten outstanding civil society organisations and individuals for their work in the field.

At an award ceremony organised by the KRG's Minister for the Region for Civil Society Affairs, the Prime Minister celebrated their work in human rights, the rights of women, education and youth development. He said, "The KRG is firmly committed to a vibrant partnership with non-governmental organisations and individuals, to raise the quality of life in the Kurdistan Region and aid our social development. The public, private and third sectors must work hand in hand to create a new democratic and federal country."

Commenting on the dynamic and cooperative relationship between the KRG and the third sector, the Prime Minister said, "One good example is the drafting of a Civil Society Law for the Kurdistan Region. A short time ago, I asked civil society organisations to submit their thoughts on this law. I am happy to say that a draft law has been formulated by a committee of NGOs in cooperation with the Minister for the Region for Civil Society Affairs. After being studied and approved by the government, it has now been passed to the Kurdistan National Assembly for further consideration and ratification."

Prime Minister Barzani also used his address to reiterate his strong support for women's rights. He said, "As we progress with our economic development, we must not neglect our cultural development. Some of the old customs must change; and the rights of all human beings, be they women, men or children, must be fully respected."

The event was the first of an annual award for civil society organisations. Mr George Mansour, Minister for the Region for Civil Society Affairs, said, "We look forward to seeing the efforts of individuals and organisations become more effective, powerful and successful in addressing the questions and needs of our society...and to sharing their ideas and experiences with sister organisations in other parts of Iraq, the Middle East and internationally."

The award ceremony was attended by a representative of President Talabany and officials from the federal government in Baghdad, members of the Kurdistan Regional Assembly and KRG, Erbil-based members of the international diplomatic corps, and representatives from many civil society organisations working in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

The organisations and individuals awarded were:

From Erbil governorate: The Masala Centre for Capacity Building represented by Mr Abdullah Khalid; Ronahi Organisation for Culture and Social Activities represented by Ms Zhihan Mirani; and Organisation for the Support of Democracy and Society represented by Ms Mujda Rashad.

From Suleimaniah governorate: The Kurdistan Economic Development Organisation represented by Mr Hisam Hakim Barzinji; the Badlisi Cultural Centre represented by Mr Hiwa Ahmad Darwesh; Mr Sartep Ali Muhammad; and Ms Gulzar Mustafa Mazher.

From Dohuk governorate: Harikar represented by Mr Salah Yassin Majid; the Committee for Development and Reconstruction in the Kurdistan Region represented by Mr Shawkat Taha Ahmad; and Dr Salwan Rashid Sinjari.

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2008 2:34 PM
Subject: British parliamentary group calls for UK to support Kurdistan Region as model for Iraq

British parliamentary group calls for UK to support Kurdistan Region as model for Iraq

June 18, 2008

London, UK (KRG.org) - A group of British parliamentarians yesterday published a report that calls for Britain to support the Kurdistan Region as a model for Iraq, whose success is in the interests of all those who want a peaceful and stable Middle East.

Members of the Kurdistan Region All Party Parliamentary Group announced the report, "The Kurdistan Region: Future Prospects", at a meeting yesterday in the House of Commons attended by Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, and Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the KRG's High Representative to the UK.

The report says, "The Kurdistan Region, as part of the wider federal Iraq, deserves a far higher degree of international attention and support to enable its people to finally fashion a peaceful, democratic and secular future. Its success is in the interests of all those who want a peaceful and stable Middle East."

The report, written following a fact-finding visit to the Kurdistan Region in Iraq by the MPs in February, makes eight recommendations for the British parliament, government and people to consider:

- Support the federal, decentralised system in Iraq
- Advocate the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution on the disputed territories
- Press Turkey to engage in talks with Erbil, Washington and Baghdad to find a lasting political solution to the PKK issue
- Raise awareness of the genocide against the Kurds
- Encourage British investment in various sectors of the economy and in English-language education
- Support efforts to protect and empower women
- Support the development of a free and professional media
- Support and encourage links between the Kurdistan Region and UK academic institutions

Minister Bakir, speaking in the British parliament, thanked the MPs for their report, and said, "We were honoured that this UK parliamentary delegation took the time to visit the Kurdistan Region. This reports shows how important it is for delegations to visit the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to see for themselves the progress we are making and the model of success that we provide for the rest of Iraq.

He added, "The MPs' recommendations are realistic and vital if we want to succeed in building a new democratic, federal and pluralistic Iraq that lives in peace with itself and with its neighbours. They are in line with the forward-looking vision of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in building a prosperous future for all. The Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq need political support, and we in the KRG hope that the British government and the international community seriously consider the report's recommendations."

Ms Abdul Rahman added, "The parliamentary delegation met people from all walks of life during their visit. Their report is a good snapshot of the situation in Kurdistan as well as the aspirations of its people, its parliament and government. They make important and incisive recommendations and we hope the British government will follow through on the parliamentary group's advice."

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2008 3:48 PM
Subject: KRG's Head of Foreign Relations Falah Mustafa Bakir meets UK ministers in London

KRG's Head of Foreign Relations meets UK ministers in London

June 14, 2008

London, UK (KRG.org) – Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, this week met Dr Kim Howells, the British Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and other officials and members of parliament in an official visit to the UK.

Mr Bakir and Dr Howells discussed political, economic and security developments in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq as a whole, and the progress made in Iraq's political process. They also discussed the strengthening relations between the UK and the Kurdistan Region.

Mr Bakir also met Mr Liam Byrne, Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, and Mr David Lammy, Minister for Skills, to discuss issues of common concern such as British assistance in capacity building in Kurdistan. He met Ms Ann Clwyd MP to tell her about the KRG's policies to protect human rights and women's rights.

Mr Bakir said, "This has been a good opportunity to look at issues of mutual interest and increase the UK's understanding of the political situation in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq. We discussed areas where we can increase cooperation, such as trade and investment, and political, economic and cultural ties. We greatly appreciate the UK's support for the Kurdistan Region in the past, and now we are working hard for a brighter future."

The KRG's Head of Foreign Relations was accompanied by Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the KRG High Representative to the UK; and senior officials from the KRG Department of Foreign Relations. The visit was hosted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Iraq Group, headed by Mr Frank Baker.

Mr Bakir also spoke at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Global Strategy Forum and the Next Century Foundation. He met several MPs and peers from all three major political parties and will address the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Kurdistan Region next week.

Ms Sami Abdul Rahman said, "Britain is a close and key ally of the Kurdistan Region and we are pleased the KRG, through Mr Bakir's visit, has had the opportunity to discuss recent developments with our friends here. We look forward to deepening our ties with Britain politically, economically and culturally."

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, June 20, 2008 1:43 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani's speech at civil society award ceremony

Prime Minister's speech at civil society award ceremony Erbil, 16 June 2008

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Distinguished guests, dear attendants, good morning and welcome to this event. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to those who have come from Baghdad and elsewhere today.

It is my pleasure to participate with you in this ceremony to award and thank a number of civil society organisations and individuals.

Today's awards are an important example of the close working relationship we enjoy in the Kurdistan Region between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the 'third sector.'

We are proud to reward here in Erbil, for the first time, those who are actively working to build civil society programmes in the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq.

This reward is for those broad minded, tolerant and responsible individuals and organisations who are working to serve the people of the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq.

The KRG is firmly committed to a vibrant partnership with non-governmental organisations and individuals in order to raise the quality of life in the Kurdistan Region and aid our social development.

We believe that the participation of civil society organisations is essential if we are to succeed in building a democratic and free Iraq. The public, private and third sectors must work hand in hand to create a new democratic and federal country.

The third sector has an important and effective role to play in this process. It can gather and strengthen the voice of people who have similar views on issues, and can pressure the government and society on these issues.

The third sector must carry out activities that the government may not be able to do well and it can provide a conducive environment and means of enhancing active participation in civil life.

The third sector exists between the public and private sectors and must connect these two. The KRG believes in the importance and influence of this sector.

The KRG wants to serve as a facilitator and promoter of the third sector so it can achieve its objectives. We consider supporting the third sector to be an important government task.

It is important that this sector is independent of the government and parties. There are times when we will disagree on issues, but at others we will find agreement in our views attitudes and opinions. It should always be remembered that we share the same objective: improving the lives of the people and society in the Kurdistan Region. We must align ourselves with other parts of the world with respect to human and individual rights.

I am pleased to say that the channels of communication between government and the third sector run smoothly. They facilitate this important cooperation and I am sure they will continue to do so.

One good example of this is the drafting of a Civil Society Law for the Kurdistan Region. A short time ago, I asked civil society organisations to submit their thoughts on this law. I am happy to say that a draft law has been formulated by a committee of NGOs in cooperation with the Minister for the Region for Civil Society Affairs. After being studied and approved by the government, it has now been passed to the Kurdistan National Assembly for further consideration.

The KRG believes that those who deal with the issues of civil society on a daily basis are best suited to understand the necessity and importance of such a law. We believe this because there must be an opportunity for our entire society to actively participate in its development process.

The principle behind empowering civil society experts themselves to draft this law aligns with the KRG's conviction that to be most efficient and effective, and to deliver the best service to the people we must move beyond the old model where the state was the provider of all services.

Instead, we must concentrate on enabling experts and individuals to make their own decisions and progress. Initiatives and efforts such as this are why we are gathered here today, it is another example of the success of collective work and initiative.

I want to congratulate and commend all those who are being awarded today for their efforts on behalf of the people of the Kurdistan Region. Today's award recipients have worked in the fields of human rights, democracy, women's rights, capacity building, and related areas.

All of these areas are central to the government's social development plans. Today's organisations and individuals are carrying out important work in the field. And with cultural issues such as human rights and the rights of women and children, this is precisely the kind of hands-on work that changes attitudes and enhances lives.

Promoting and enhancing the rights of women is one of the KRG's highest priorities. I have said before that as we progress with our economic development, we must not neglect our cultural development. Some of the old customs must change; and the rights of all human beings, be they women, men or children, must be fully respected.

Today I want to once again underline the KRG's commitment to women's rights. No man has the right to physically harm any woman. Women must be afforded the same rights as their male colleagues in the workplace and in society in general. All women must have the same educational opportunities as men.

I would like to commend the KRG's High Commission on Violence Against Women. The KRG is working seriously on this issue. Directorates have been established in Erbil, Dohuk and Suleimaniah to monitor and prosecute crimes against women.

I want to thank both the Minister for the Interior and the Minister for the Region for the Interior, for the practical steps they have taken in opening these Directorates in the governorates. They are ensuring that a crime that was once hidden is now being publicly addressed. And in an encouraging sign, the latest statistics examined by the High Commission indicate a fall in the number of crimes being committed against women in the Kurdistan Region. But we have not yet achieved our goals.

We will continue in our efforts to implement the law. This is a social and cultural problem and one that needs a multidirectional approach to solve it.

Civil society organisations have an important role to prevent violence against women. The KRG supports all civil society organisations working to help women attain all their rights to guarantee a better and equal life in the Kurdistan Region.

The issues of youth and education are also high on the KRG's list of priorities. Our education system must be updated and our education infrastructure modernised. The KRG takes its responsibilities in this area seriously. We must address our life and work in a progressive and open-minded way.

The Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq are undergoing a process of change. When our youth graduate from college, it is unrealistic to believe that we can provide housing and jobs for all. But through the growth of our private sector, we believe that qualified youths who have worked hard and been well-educated will be able to find good jobs in our country.

That is why I reiterate the seriousness of education. If we want to build a better society we must be efficient, mature and well educated. We must develop self sufficiency and avoid a culture of dependency. And we must all work together to achieve our goals.

I also believe that civil society organisations can have a dramatic impact on helping both the public and private sector in the Kurdistan Region operate in a transparent way which is free from corruption. Corruption is a social, ethical, moral, administrative and financial problem. It is a betrayal of the people's trust, and it must not be allowed to take root in our region. Our society, universities, media, civil society organisations, and people from all strata of life must work together to fight corruption. We are all responsible for working hard to build a prosperous society.

I would like to assure you all that the KRG is very serious in its efforts to fight corruption and spread transparency in Kurdistan Region. We will continue this progress going forward.

In addressing these and other issues, civil society organisations and individuals are carrying out tasks that the government cannot do effectively on its own.

The government is fulfilling its modernising role – we have amended and passed new laws, and are ensuring these laws are applied, we are reducing bureaucracy, and we are sponsoring initiatives and programmes in order to protect and enhance human rights, women's rights, and the education of our youth in a contemporary fashion.

I am happy to see that our emerging civil society organisations are playing their part so effectively as well.

In conclusion, I want to congratulate and thank the organisations and individuals who are continuing their activities to serve the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq. I also want to congratulate all those who are receiving today's awards.

I want to thank the Minister of Region for Civil Society Affairs and his colleagues for organising these awards and this ceremony.

I also want to thank you all for coming today to show your support for civil society in the Kurdistan Region. I assure you that the KRG will continue its efforts in this regard. We are serious in our commitment to working with you to create a bright future.

We believe that if the cooperation between government and third sector we have seen so far continues, together we can be an effective force for change in the Kurdistan Region and an example for all of Iraq.

We have a long way to travel and we cannot succeed alone. We must work exhaustively and in cooperation with each other to create a prosperous future.

In conclusion I want to thank today's awards committee and all those who are participating in this ceremony.

Thank you all very much and welcome once again.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, June 23, 2008 11:11 AM
Subject: KRG Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir comments on oil production, UN proposals

Iraqi Kurd official comments on oil production, UN proposals

Al-Sharq al-Awsat

June 11, 2008

Falah Mustafa, head of the foreign relations department (equivalent to foreign minister) in Iraq's Kurdish Region Government, has disclosed that Prime Minister Nechervan Barzani will visit Baghdad in the middle of this month to discuss with the federal government's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and other officials there the pending issues between the Kurdistan region and the federal government, foremost of them the oil and gas bill and the Kirkuk issue.

He said the "oil explorations operations in the region are continuing and there are oil contracts waiting to be signed in addition to the ones signed before two years. We are now in the production stage." He noted Prime Minister Barzani's assertions that the "region is ready to pump oil through the Iraqi pipelines at the rate of 1 million barrels a day to start with." He added that the "regional government's compliance with the oil resources issue is in accordance with the Iraqi constitution, that is, 17 per cent of the revenues goes to the region's government and the 38 per cent [as published] to the federal government in Baghdad. This means we are not taking all the revenues as some wrongly believe."

Mustafa stressed that "under the Iraqi constitution, oil and gas belong to the people and we can offer much to our Iraqi people, particularly now at the stage of building and reconstruction." He pointed out that the Iraqi oil and gas bill "was delayed because of differences in view between the region's government and some in the federal one who want to keep the oil industry policy as it was before, that is, subject to total central policy while we in the regional government and some officials in the federal government believe that this important industry should be subject to the free economy policy, or the free market one, and open to investors so as to rebuild the oil industry's technology and expand the exploration and investments. This is more of an economic issue than a political one; otherwise will Iraq be content with exporting 2 million barrels a day at a time when it can export 6 million barrels."

Speaking to "Al-Sharq al-Awsat" in London which he is visiting at the invitation of British officials, Mustafa said "we are here to meet British officials and discuss with them the situations in the region of Kurdistan and Iraq and the ongoing political process in the country and also to strengthen our relations, particularly the political, economic, and cultural ones." He added that "we are acting in accordance with what is set out for us in the Iraqi constitution and what is in accord with Iraq's foreign policy and in coordination with the foreign ministry to serve Iraq as a whole and the region of Kurdistan because we are part of Iraq and the Iraqi people."

On the nature of relations today between the region's government led by Nechervan Barzani and the federal one led by Nuri al-Maliki and whether the negative situations in Baghdad were pressuring and affecting the region's policies, Mustafa said: "It is known that the Kurdish political leadership decided, in accordance with the voluntary union principle, that we should be part of Iraq, live in peace, act for the country's progress, and do everything we can for whatever is in the Iraqi people's interest. As long as the region is part of Iraq, we will do everything in our power to influence positively the political, economic, and cultural situations all over Iraq. We always call on the brothers in Baghdad to take our experiences in these fields to Iraq's other areas and are trying our best not to let some of the negative situations in some Iraqi areas to affect the region."

Regarding the proposals by the UN secretary general's representative for solving the Kirkuk and disputed areas issue, the Kurdish official said "the solution for this problem needs real will and political determination by all the Iraqi parties. The best solution is compliance with Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution. The Kurdish leadership's acceptance of it meant a lot of concession." He pointed out that "if Kirkuk comes administratively under the region, this will not mean it will be separated from Iraq but remains Iraqi like Arbil, Al-Sulaymaniyah, and Dahuk, which are Iraqi governorates." He added: "The first stage proposals presented by the UN secretary general's representative are not practical and ignore many facts. There are just non-binding proposals and were a deep disappointment for the Iraqi parties."

Mustafa was optimistic about "the development of relations between the region and Turkey, particularly as we are seeking to develop our economic, cultural, and political relations with our neighbour Turkey because it knows that we can play a positive role in the relations between it and Iraq. It is an historic neighbour and helped us a lot in the past. It has big investments in the region and can expand them in Iraq's other regions."

Link: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/>

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, June 23, 2008 12:29 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in Baghdad to discuss hydro-carbons law and other key issues

Prime Minister Barzani in Baghdad to discuss hydro-carbons law and other key issues

June 23, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) - Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today arrived in Baghdad for meetings with Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki on key issues concerning Iraq as a whole and the Kurdistan Region.

Prime Minister Barzani, who heads a delegation from the Kurdistan Region, will meet Prime Minister Maliki to discuss the current political process in Iraq, national reconciliation and government efforts to reinforce law and order. The talks will also focus on the hydro-carbon law, Article 140 regarding the disputed territories and the Peshmerga forces.

Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, said, "The aim of these talks is the establishment of proper mechanisms for relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the federal government in Baghdad. Additionally, the aim is to push for the creation of a hydro-carbon law which includes an efficient free-market approach, enhancing the private sector, encouraging foreign investment, and securing transparency as its main principles."

Mr Bakir, speaking to KRG.org, said, "The Kurdistan Regional Government acts on behalf of all the people of Iraq and within the constitutional framework. As for Kirkuk and the other disputed territories, the KRG reiterates its position on achieving a peaceful and just solution for this problem, which is seen in the full implementation of Article 140 as stipulated in the Iraqi Constitution."

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2008 3:29 PM
Subject: Kurdistan Region welcomes US business delegations

Kurdistan Region welcomes US business delegations

June 24, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) The Kurdistan Regional Government welcomed two large American business delegations for three days of meetings with local government and business leaders. The delegations from the US Department of Commerce, led by Deputy Secretary John J. Sullivan, and the US Chamber of Commerce include 28 representatives from US companies – the largest American business delegation ever to visit the Kurdistan Region.

The delegations were warmly welcomed in Erbil by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials: Mr Herish Muharram, Chairman of the Investment Board of Kurdistan; and Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations; and Mr Karim Sinjari, Minister of State for the Interior.

To assess the Kurdistan Region's current environment and its needs, the delegations met Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah and several ministers, including the ministers for agriculture, electricity and planning.

Ms Nawroz Mawlood Mohamad Amin, the Kurdistan Investment Board's Director-General, said, "The Kurdistan Region is ripe for investment in many sectors, and we are here to help make the process easier for foreigners as well as locals." She added, "The delegation will also be able to explore business opportunities with local companies, such as members of the Erbil, Suleimaniah and Dohuk Chambers of Commerce."

Prime Minister's Nechirvan Barzani's government has taken steps to make investing in the region easier for foreign businesses. In July 2006 the Kurdistan National Assembly (parliament) passed the Kurdistan Region Investment Law, one of the most liberal investment laws in the Middle East.

Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, said, "The KRG has created a safe and secure environment for foreign investors to enter the Iraqi market. The presence of the US delegations make clear that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is open for business. We welcome and encourage US investment in our region and are eager to explore how we can deepen and expand our economic ties with the United States."

The two groups will meet local and international business representatives and tour sites in or near Erbil, the capital city. The KRG has previously hosted business delegations from Italy, Austria, Sweden Japan, the UK, Poland and other countries.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Holding, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 26, 2008 1:48 PM
Subject: US Department of Commerce to bring more US companies after historic trade mission to Erbil

US Department of Commerce to bring more US companies after historic trade mission to Erbil June 26, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) - The US Deputy Secretary for Commerce Mr John Sullivan yesterday said that the US State Department and the Department of Commerce are committed to bringing American businesses to the Kurdistan Region, after leading the first major trade mission to Iraq in over 20 years.

He said, "We firmly believe that a conducive business climate exists in this [Kurdistan] Region. Everyone has been inspired by what we have seen, and we hope this historic mission leads to further cooperation between American businesses and the development of both the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq."

Mr Sullivan was speaking at a press conference at the end of a four-day visit by two delegations from the US Department of Commerce and the US Chamber of Commerce. They included 28 representatives of American companies.

The US Chamber of Commerce hosted a gala reception for the delegation, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) ministers and officials, and local and international business people from across the Kurdistan Region. Mr Richard Smith who headed the US Chamber of Commerce delegation, declared the visit a resounding success and said that they will leave the Kurdistan Region feeling very encouraged about the business opportunities.

Speaking at the gala Mr Mohammad Raouf Mohammad, the KRG Trade Minister, said, "The KRG welcomes all those interested in investing here, we are also the gateway to doing business in the rest of Iraq." He added, "You have witnessed our stability, our security, and our openness towards the West. We hope to soon see concrete steps being taken towards projects between American companies and the Region."

Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, said, "Encouraging visits by international delegations of all kinds is a high priority for the KRG. We encourage all parties interested in our investment potential to come and see the Region for themselves. The Investment Board and the KRG are here to provide practical support for private investors and companies."

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 11:11 AM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani announces political committee to discuss Iraqi federal hydrocarbons law

PM Barzani announces political committee to discuss Iraqi federal hydrocarbons law

June 28, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) – Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today announced that after the latest round of talks in Baghdad with the federal government, a committee has been formed to look at how best to create a much needed federal oil and gas law.

Prime Minister Barzani speaking at a press conference in Erbil said that during discussions with federal Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki they decided to form a political committee including some of Iraq's senior political figures that will study the framework for a hydrocarbons law. They both agreed to sit on the committee and try to find a solution that will be in the interests of all Iraq.

He added that discussions with federal Iraqi officials are ongoing and that this round of talks focused on the need for a hydrocarbons law, the future of the *Peshmerga* forces, and Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution on the disputed territories.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad have held frequent meetings, and Mr Barzani stressed that continued dialogue should be seen as positive and healthy in the process of building a federal state

Regarding the status of the Kurdistan Region's *Peshmerga* forces, he said, "The question to be answered is whether the *Peshmerga* are part of the federal defence system or not. We need a clear definition and framework to regulate their activities and their participation in missions outside the Kurdistan Region, if and when they are needed." Two *Peshmerga* divisions already operate as part of the federal defence system following an agreement between Baghdad and Erbil, the status of the other *Peshmerga* forces remains under discussion.

The Prime Minister also said at the press conference the KRG remains committed to the implementation of Article 140 and a solution that will benefit Iraq as a whole. "I have seen no political obstacle that would stand in the way of the Constitutional article being fully implemented", he said. "Baghdad has commented on the recent UN report on the disputed territories, but the report is non-binding and the UN was asked to offer its technical assistance to the discussions." The KRG expects to soon see the second UN report by Mr Stefan de Mistura, the Secretary General's Special Representative in Iraq.

Answering a question about future US-Iraqi relations, Prime Minister Barzani said, "A long-term strategic agreement between the federal Iraqi government and the US is in the best interests of all Iraq, and the KRG supports such an agreement."

When asked about the future of negotiations with Turkey and the possibility of a meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, he said, "Positive relations with Turkey are a priority for the KRG, and while no such talks are planned at this time we welcome all dialogue between ourselves and the Turkish government."

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, July 30, 2008 5:35 PM
Subject: Over 100,000 demonstrate in Erbil against Iraqi parliament's secret Kirkuk ballot

Over 100,000 demonstrate in Erbil against Iraqi parliament's secret Kirkuk ballot July 29, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) - Well over 100,000 people demonstrated today in Erbil against the Iraqi parliament's recent unconstitutional secret ballot on Kirkuk.

Tens of thousands of protestors filled three major highways in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region's capital, to call for Kirkuk's future status to be decided lawfully and according to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution.

Many protestors said that they also wanted to show solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attack at a similar demonstration in Kirkuk yesterday, in which 25 people were killed and 180 wounded.

The Kurdistan Region's President Masoud Barzani and Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani are in Baghdad today for discussions on the provincial elections bill. The unlawful secret ballot, which was one section of that bill, was on the make-up of Kirkuk's governing council. The Kurdistan Regional Government hopes that a legal solution can be found through dialogue and cooperation.

The Kurdistan block and many members of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq group boycotted the secret ballot, which took place last week, called for its immediate veto, adherence to Constitutional law and for proper legal procedures in Parliament. The bill was also vetoed by Iraq's President Jalal Talabani and the Presidential Council.

People in the Kurdistan Region were angered by the secret vote, which violates the Iraqi parliament's procedures and was passed by less than half of MPs. Some demonstrators said they felt their patience had been pushed to the limits by the unlawful attempt to bypass Article 140 which already has agreed obligations in place regarding Kirkuk and other disputed territories.

The large demonstration was peaceful, with many residents of Erbil from universities, trade unions, political parties, businesses, professional associations and the civil service taking part. The Ministry of the Interior estimated the number of demonstrators in Erbil to be well over 100,000. Demonstrations are also expected in the cities of Suleimaniah and Dohuk on Wednesday and Thursday.

Since the Iraqi Constitution was democratically approved in 2005, Kurdish people who were forcibly expelled from Kirkuk by previous Iraqi regimes have waited to return to their homes. The Constitution's Article 140 sets out a mechanism for a just and fair resolution of the issue of the so-called disputed territories, including Kirkuk. Many people hope and expect Kirkuk and other territories will become a part of the Kurdistan Region following a future referendum.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, July 31, 2008 12:01 PM
Subject: Kurdistan Regional Government condemns Kirkuk terrorist attack

Kurdistan Regional Government condemns Kirkuk terrorist attack

Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
29 July 2008

Statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government

Yesterday a suicide bomber exploded a bomb during a peaceful demonstration in the city of Kirkuk. Twenty-five people were killed and 180 others were injured. Many of the injured remain in hospital.

The Kurdistan Regional Government condemns this cowardly terrorist attack on innocent people. We express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, and we thank the emergency and security services and the people of Kirkuk for coming to their aid. We will do our utmost to ensure that medical treatment and facilities are made available to help the injured, within the Kurdistan Region and beyond.

The terrorist attack targeted a peaceful demonstration against the Iraqi parliament's unlawful secret ballot on Kirkuk. The demonstrators called for the Constitution's Article 140 to be implemented. They used peaceful means to express their wishes, and were answered with a cowardly terrorist attack.

We will never allow terrorists to stop our people from achieving their legitimate rights. The will of the people of Kirkuk and other so-called disputed territories should be respected and their wishes should be carried out as set out in the Iraqi Constitution, not by secret ballots on dubious bills. The Iraqi Parliament's method of attempting to pass the bill gives terrorists opportunities to drive rifts between the Iraqi people and bring more hardship to the rest of the country.

Our position on the injustices against the people of Kirkuk is very clear: Failing to implement Article 140 would be a breach of the Constitution that can only complicate and worsen the situation.

We have chosen to solve the issue constitutionally, so that the different peoples of Kirkuk and other disputed territories may live together peacefully. Implementing Article 140 would thwart those who are doing all they can to prevent a peaceful resolution in Kirkuk.

We ask the people of Kirkuk - Kurds, Arabs, Turcomans, Chaldeans and Assyrians - to stand united and continue to live together peacefully.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, August 11, 2008 12:09 PM
Subject: KRG President Masoud Barzani: Iraq will fall apart if constitution violated

President Barzani: Iraq will fall apart if constitution violated

August 7, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) - Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani yesterday in Erbil said that Iraq is in danger of falling apart if the constitution is violated.

He said, “We will not allow the Kurdish people’s achievements to be wrecked by the Iraqi parliament. Iraq will fall apart if the Iraqi constitution is violated.”

He was referring to a secret ballot on Kirkuk in the Iraqi parliament on 22nd July that violated the parliament’s procedures and the Iraqi constitution, and angered many MPs who boycotted the vote and walked out in protest. The violation has stalled the provincial elections law.

At a press conference in Erbil following 10 days of meetings in Baghdad, President Barzani said, “The vote was a chauvinistic act, it was an attempt to kill Article 140 [of the constitution] and remove Kirkuk provincial council’s authority. We accepted postponing the elections in Kirkuk, but we will never accept the removal of the council’s rightful authority.”

The section on Kirkuk in the Iraqi Provincial Elections bill called for seats in Kirkuk ’s provincial council to be divided equally among Kirkuk's ethnic groups, rather than allowing voters' ballots to decide the number of representatives for each group. This would have violated Article 140 of Iraq’s constitution which already sets out how Kirkuk ’s future status will be decided. President Barzani said that he is in favour of holding provincial elections in Iraq as long as they are carried out according to and within the framework of the constitution. He said, “The distribution [of seats in Kirkuk] should be decided by election results.”

Tens of thousands of people in the Kurdistan Region demonstrated against the secret ballot. For many Kurds the democratically approved Iraqi constitution enshrines the new federal democratic state and a just and equal relationship between all of its peoples. They fear that actions violating the constitution may relegate Kurds once again to second-class status in Iraq.

The President added that despite the disagreement, the Kurds will continue to support the Iraqi government coalition and play a positive part in the new Iraq. He said, “Kurds do not have any plan to dismantle the Iraqi government because we have played a significant role in forming that government.”

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, August 20, 2008 11:03 AM
Subject: KRG President Masoud Barzani's speech in Kirkuk

President Barzani: Kurds Ready To Engage In Dialogue With All Kirkuk's Citizens, Constitution Should Be Implemented To Resolve Conflict Over Provincial Elections

Kurdistan Region Presidency (KRP.org)

August 16, 2008

For Immediate Release

PRESIDENT BARZANI: KURDS READY TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH ALL KIRKUK'S CITIZENS, CONSTITUTION SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO RESOLVE CONFLICT OVER PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

On First Official Trip to Kirkuk since Liberation, President Barzani of the Kurdistan Region Clarifies Position on Kirkuk, Expresses Desire to Engage in Dialogue with All Groups to See the City Become Model for Peaceful Coexistence, and Rejects Claim that Kurds are Trying to Unilaterally Annex the City

Full Release

President Masoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Region visited Kirkuk officially for the first time since the 2003 liberation, after a series of violent attacks stemming from the controversy over an upcoming Iraqi provincial election bill rocked the city. During his trip, the President sought to correct reports in the media about the Kurdish opposition to the bill by clarifying that the Kurds did not reject sharing power in the province but thought this should be determined through the constitutionally promised electoral process, rather than mandated by others. He expressed a firm desire to see the city become a bulwark for Iraqi democracy and peaceful coexistence despite its diversity, and steadfastly set forth a policy of dialogue with all the city's inhabitants regardless of their race, ethnicity, or religious creed.

"We come to bear a message of brotherhood and peace for all the people of Kirkuk -Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans, Chaldeans and Assyrians", the President stated to open his address before the Kirkuk Provincial Council.

The President went on to speak about reports in the media which claim the Kurds rejected the proposed election law simply because it mandated power-sharing on the provincial council, which the Kurds currently control. "The issue of Kirkuk is very clear. There is a constitution approved by the majority of the people of Iraq. There is Article 140 in this constitution related to Kirkuk... Article 140 of the constitution will not be cancelled until all its provisions are implemented." It is the Kurdish position that the Kirkuk issue be resolved through the mandated plebiscite and not included in the debate over the provincial election law, which Kurdish leaders are committed to see held at the earliest possible date.

Seeking to assuage fears that minorities would be discriminated against should the province freely vote to join the existing Kurdistan Region, he pledged, "We believe that the Kurdistan Region is a region for all: Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans, Chaldeans and Assyrians. Equally, Kirkuk is a city for these same people. When we talk about Kirkuk as belonging to the Kurdistan Region, we do not seek to deny Kirkuk its Iraqi identity... In the draft constitution of the Kurdistan Region, we have made sure that the rights of all people are protected regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion...because many different groups live in the Kurdistan Region, not just the Kurds. "

As proof of this commitment, he pointed to the behavior of Kurdish troops upon taking control of the city in the drive to overthrow Saddam, the Kurdish release of Arab and Iraqi prisoners of war in the aftermath of the 1991 uprisings, and his long history of advocating democracy for all Iraq. Although he acknowledged mistakes may have been made in the past by solitary individuals, he disavowed these actions as contrary to the policy of the Kurdistan Region to treat Kirkuk with fairness, honesty, and a democratic ethos.

Accordingly he stated, "this [resolution of the current conflict] is first and foremost the responsibility of the people of Kirkuk; outsiders can only have a helping role. However, I think there are some external people who are trying to manipulate this internal process to determine the fate of Kirkuk for their own ends." He committed to partnering with Kirkuk's diverse communities to overcome attempts to drive the groups apart and vowed to ensure their voice is heard through a fair, free election.

The President also expressed his personal condolences to those who have fallen victim to the recent violence.

President Barzani was unanimously elected the first President of the Kurdistan Region on 12 June, 2005. As President, he holds the highest executive authority in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, oversees the Region's external relations with the federal government, and represents the people of the Kurdistan Region. President Barzani has a long, illustrious history as a leader of the Kurdish movement, including a previous post on the Iraqi Governing Council. He is the leader of one of the two largest Iraqi Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and son of the deceased Mullah Mustafa Barzani, often referred to as the "father of the Kurds."

If you would like to know more or schedule an interview with President Barzani, please call 00964 750 4985500 or email Chief of Staff Fuad Hussein at: diwan@krp.org

Full text of President Barzani's speech in Kirkuk

President Barzani: Kurds Ready To Engage In Dialogue With All Kirkuk's Citizens, Constitution Should Be Implemented To Resolve Conflict

President Barzani recently visited Kirkuk, subject of the current conflict over the Iraqi provincial election law and scene of a recent terrorist attack, for the first time since the 2003 liberation in order to carry a message of peace and fraternity from Kurds to the ethnically-mixed city.

While he committed to seeing the Iraqi Constitution enforced, he called for Kirkukis to use this opportunity to define their own destiny and create a model for peaceful co-existence. He rejected claims that Kurds are trying to unilaterally annex the city or deny its Iraqi identity.

Transcript of President Barzani's Speech in Kirkuk, 8 August 2008.

"We come to bear a message of brotherhood and peace for all the people of Kirkuk - Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans, Chaldeans and Assyrians.

We are here to thank the people of Kirkuk for taking part in the recent large demonstrations [against the unconstitutional passing of an Iraqi provincial law which would deny them their right to democratically elect their own provincial leadership]. We are also here to give our condolences to the families who lost loved ones in the terrorist attack during those demonstrations and we pray for a speedy recovery for the wounded.

We have come to express a firm desire to engage in dialogue with all the different groups in Kirkuk. We believe this is a good opportunity to reflect and try to find solutions for the problems we are facing.

I warmly welcome you all and I am really happy to be here with you. We have long wanted and wished for this gathering to take place. Today we are carrying a message of love, peace and fraternity; a message of peace from the Kurds towards the Arabs, Turkomans, Chaldeans, Assyrians and all other people in this city.

We are here to tell you that we believe in democracy. The main slogan of the September Revolution [Iraqi Kurdish resistance movement 1961-1975] was "democracy for Iraq, civil rights for the Kurdish people". The rationale for this slogan was that without a democratic system, the problems of Iraq could never be solved.

We believe that the Kurdistan Region is a region for all: Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans, Chaldeans and Assyrians. Equally, Kirkuk is a city for these same people. When we talk about Kirkuk as belonging to the Kurdistan Region, we do not seek to deny Kirkuk its Iraqi identity. Kirkuk, like Basra, Ramadi, Erbil, and Sulaimniya is an Iraqi city.

In the draft constitution of the Kurdistan Region, we have made sure that the rights of all people are protected regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion; especially those of Turkomans, Chaldeans, Assyrians and Arabs, because many different groups live in the Kurdistan Region, not just the Kurds.

We never oppose anyone on the basis of their ideology or political opinions. We believe in dialogue. It is true that there are problems, but some people went too far on the Kirkuk issue. Unfortunately, some people are trying to create divisions among us. Instead [of allowing them to be successful], we would like to make Kirkuk an example of peaceful co-existence between different religious, sectarian and ethnic groups. This is first and foremost the responsibility of the people of Kirkuk; outsiders can only have a helping role. However, I think there are some external people who are trying to manipulate this internal process to determine the fate of Kirkuk for their own ends.

You all know the extent of the oppression inflicted on the Kurdish people and Turkomans and Arabs [under the previous regime]. We never accused our Arab brothers of these terrible crimes of Arabization, displacement, and the destruction of our villages , [but rather the disastrous regime that violated all Iraqis' rights].

You must remember the 1991 uprising in the Kurdistan Region when thousands of Iraqi soldiers surrendered and were captured by the Peshmergas. Not a single Iraqi soldier was tortured, at a time when our wounds were still bleeding and when there were still hundreds and thousands of wounded victims of the chemical attacks lying in hospitals. The captured Iraqi soldiers were treated with dignity. They were freed to return to their families. This is proof that the friendship bond between Arabs and Kurds was strong and will remain strong.

We would like to reach common understanding and do away with our fears. I will not hide anything from you; there may have been violations and infringements on the part of the Kurdish side in Kirkuk. But rest assured that this is against our policy. A short while ago, I heard from Rokan [deputy governor of Kirkuk and an Arab] that the Arabs in Kirkuk are disappointed and are concerned about the situation. The Kurds in Kirkuk are also disappointed and concerned; but we must get over this and open a new chapter.

I call on Arabs, Turkomans and Christians of Kirkuk to engage in dialogue with us. Let us accept each other and be honest with each other; this is the only way we can achieve our goals. Let us not wait for others to force their agendas upon us.

There are many outside hands at play in Kirkuk. We would like to counter these attempts with our honesty and a message of peace and love and dialogue.

Do you remember the time when Kirkuk was liberated [in 2003] from the previous regime? Our Peshmerga forces were in Kirkuk alone and could do whatever they wanted. Did they commit any violations against anyone in Kirkuk? Did they discriminate against any particular group in Kirkuk? But all these positive actions must be commended and reciprocated. When the Kurds never hear anything positive from the Arabs, no doubt it causes tensions to sometimes rise.

I repeat that we must get over this chapter and try to find solutions. There are some who have profound disagreements with each other over many issues; but when it comes to the issue of Kirkuk and the Kurdish cause in general, they all unite.

The issue of Kirkuk is very clear. There is a constitution approved by the majority of the people of Iraq. There is Article 140 in this constitution related to Kirkuk. This Article will only be abolished when the Iraqi constitution is abolished. Those behind the 22 July conspiracy in the Iraqi parliament wanted to abolish Article 140. Those people wanted to create divisions in Iraq. Article 140 of the constitution will not be cancelled until all its provisions are implemented.

We do not create problems, but rather want to find solutions to problems. I am here with Kosrat [Kurdistan Region Vice President] and other officials to reiterate our calls for peace, love, fraternity and understanding.

Finally, I would like to thank Kirkuk provincial council for their efforts and hard work. I would also like to thank the governor of Kirkuk and all the people of Kirkuk including Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans, Chaldeans and Assyrians. I hope you all will rise to your responsibilities and not allow others to interfere in your affairs. "

This article and speech can also be found at: www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 21, 2008 3:29 PM
Subject: Speech by KRG Prime Minister Barzani at conference to bolster coordination between northern provinces and federal government

KRG hosts conference to bolster coordination between northern provinces and federal government

August 21, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan Region - Iraq (KRG.org) – Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, along with Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister Rafi’ Al-Isawi and US Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, yesterday opened a conference that focused on improving coordination between the federal government and the seven northern provinces.

The one-day economic conference, held at Shahid Saad Abdullah Conference Centre in Erbil, was attended by representatives from the governorates or provinces of Ninawa, Kirkuk, Diyala, Salahaddin, Sulemaniya, Erbil and Dohuk, as well as several ministers from both the Iraqi federal and the Kurdistan regional governments, and General Mark Hertling of the Multinational Forces.

Prime Minister Barzani, in his speech, emphasised the value of empowering regional, provincial, and local authorities. He explained that the devolution of power is practiced in advanced countries across the globe because it is more effective. “Modern governing systems have demonstrated that local and regional authorities are more responsible to their people, more efficient, more active in their work, and less burdened by bureaucracy and administrative complications,” the Prime Minister said. He added that the KRG has devolved authority to governorates and local levels when possible. “We believe that the closer authorities are to people, the more familiar they will be with the people’s needs.”

The discussions at the conference focused on the tools by which such empowerment can be best implemented. Ambassador Crocker said that although the challenges facing Iraq would not be solved in one day, having a dialogue among federal, regional, and provincial authorities is very positive.

Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister Al-Isawi initiated discussions and urged participants to focus on possible solutions.

The principle concern to most governors was the federal disbursement of funds needed to implement projects and sustain development. All sides agreed that more communication between the federal government and the governorates would be beneficial. Mr Al-Isawi directed the federal planning and finance ministries to form a committee to study this further.

Another topic of discussion was the distribution of imported goods. The federal trade ministry and the governors’ offices agreed to form a committee to ensure there are improvements in the flow of imports to the northern governorates.

The governors raised concerns regarding the federal allocation of lands that are zoned for specific purposes, such as hospitals or schools. Mr Al-Isawi directed the relevant ministries and governors to cooperate and streamline the process of presenting and reviewing proposals for the use of such lands.

PM’s speech to Iraqi governors and ministers at economic conference

Erbil, Wednesday 20 August 2008

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Dear honourable guests, good morning and welcome to this event. I would like to welcome everybody to Erbil, the capital, to participate in this important event. I would also like to warmly welcome the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Dr. Rafi' al-Isawi, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, General Hertling, ministers, governors, and all participants.

I am glad to be present with you and to participate in this important conference regarding cooperation and coordination among the Kurdistan Region and the Northern Governorates, and focusing on projects and development efforts in these governorates.

Today in Iraq we have a unique opportunity. There is fertile ground for a democratic and federal state to emerge so that we can serve our people and reconstruct our country. A country that has long suffered from a totalitarian regime that brought war and destruction to Iraq. We are one of the new states in the world in many respects. But at the same time we should be careful not to make the error of assuming that history started the day Iraq was liberated.

We in Iraq – Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and all other constituencies – have experienced tragedies, hardship, and difficult times. This is why we are now trying to build a new Iraq, so that those sad days will not be repeated, and so that we can secure a bright future for the people of Iraq. Therefore we should watch our steps carefully so as not to allow that history to be repeated or the mistakes of the past to resurface.

After the liberation of Iraq we have decided voluntarily to work together to rebuild Iraq, because we understood that the Iraqi Constitution guarantees our rights and protects us from any oppression.

That is why we, in the Kurdistan Region, consider the Iraqi Constitution as a reminder and an instrument that pays attention to historical aspects. We have to protect ourselves from mistakes and injustices in the future. We believe that after erecting a federal, democratic and pluralistic system in Iraq, the constitution will be the strong legal foundation that will help us live together in peace and stability in our Region – a Region which can enjoy strong and close relations with the central federal government.

The principle of a central authority empowering regional governments and governorates is being practiced almost all over the world, and we can benefit from the experiences of other nations. Many countries today are reviewing their governmental structure and style in order to move the decision-making process closer to the people via regional, provincial and local governments.

Modern governing systems have demonstrated that local and regional authorities are more responsible to their people, more efficient, more active in their work, and less burdened by bureaucracy and administrative complications. Many countries of the European Union adhere to the principle of devolving power to lower levels because they came to the conclusion long ago that issues and questions relevant to the people are handled most effectively and more quickly when given to regions and provinces.

Since the liberation of Iraq, in cooperation with the Coalition forces and friends of our people, efforts continue to establish a democratic, federal, transparent and active system in Iraq, a civilised system that will be aligned with modern norms. The manner in which federalism is to be enacted was agreed upon by Iraqi parties so that authority would never be accumulated by a central government and decisions would not be made unilaterally. Sharing power in Iraq is necessary so that all the people throughout Iraq can participate, will not be deprived of their rights or wishes, and will not be far from the decision-making process. And that is why any decision or law should respect the rights of the people and also the authority and wishes of the regions and governorates.

We in the KRG have insisted on maintaining the principle of distribution of power in our own internal dealings with local governments, and in our dealings with the federal government. And we have looked to advanced nations for examples – to the United States, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and elsewhere – where we have found power-sharing has a positive effect on improving government performance and allowing citizens to feel close to authorities.

The KRG seeks this kind of coordination with the Iraqi federal government, and simultaneously adheres to the same principles within the Kurdistan Region. We are working to move more power and authority within the KRG to the governorates and even to lower levels where possible. We believe that the closer authorities are to people, the more familiar they will be with the people's needs.

We support programmes to develop the governorates, programmes for which funds have been directly allocated from the central government, that enable provinces to execute service projects according to their set plan. We in the KRG closely monitor the quality and method of the process regarding governorate development that is implemented by companies and governmental actors.

Here I address my speech directly to all the attendees, and say – let us first look for solutions at the local and regional level. Let us not assume that Baghdad has the answer to each and every problem and obstacle. Let us recognise that countries around the world are devolving power to regional authorities because they reached the conclusion that this would be more successful.

To be certain, we must understand that there are some powers that must be reserved for the federal government and this must be respected, because according to the constitution the powers of government have been defined. But when the competence of local and regional authorities is strong enough to handle an issue, then those authorities should always have the opportunity to do so.

Our people have long waited for a chance to live in a peaceful, stable society, within a democratic framework, and through this type of principled partnership we can build a new and strong federal Iraq where growth and prosperity can take root, and where freedom replaces dictatorship.

When it comes to services and infrastructure we have many shortcomings, but we have made serious efforts to solve some of these problems. I can say that to a significant degree we have made good progress. All of us know that the lack of electricity, not only in the Kurdistan Region but all over Iraq, is one such difficulty. We have turned to the private sector in our efforts to find a solution to this problem.

At the same time, in the fields of education, health, and agriculture, we have also put forth serious effort, and if we can cooperate, we will benefit from each other.

I hope this conference will be successful and achieve its intended aim. The Kurdistan Regional Government is once again glad to host this conference, which serves the interests of all the people of Iraq.

Such activity presents a platform for everybody to further dialogue, exchange views, and benefit from each other. I am confident that each honourable governor has his own ideas and experiences to share in this conference, so that he can highlight challenges and issues and explore suitable mechanisms to solve these problems. The spirit of working together and looking to the future will ensure that our efforts succeed. Once again, thank you for attending the conference and I wish you success.

Thank you.

This article and speech can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Holding, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, September 17, 2008 3:38 PM
Subject: KRG officials stress importance of strategic agreement with the US, strengthen ties with Congress

KRG officials stress importance of strategic agreement with the US, strengthen ties with Congress

September 17, 2008

Washington, US (KRG.org) – Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, and Mr Qubad Talabany, Representative of the KRG in the US, held three days of intensive meetings in Washington with senior Bush Administration officials and Members of Congress about developments in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq and the Middle East.

In meetings with top officials at the Pentagon and State Department, Minister Bakir and Mr Talabany reiterated Kurdistan's commitment to partnership with the United States in support of a democratic federal Iraq, and in the fight against terrorism. They also stressed that the KRG supports completion of talks on a US-Iraq strategic agreement as soon as possible, as well as passage and enactment of the Iraqi provincial elections and hydrocarbons laws.

"We strongly support a strategic agreement between the US and Iraq and are working with other Iraqi parties to reach agreement on an elections law and a hydrocarbons law in accordance with the Iraqi constitution," said Minister Bakir.

"The KRG is part of the solution, not the problem, in meeting these Iraqi benchmarks," said Mr Talabany.

Minister Bakir and Mr Talabany also made clear that Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution must provide the basis for any resolution of the situation in Kirkuk and other disputed Iraqi territories. "There can be no resolution of the status of Kirkuk outside Article 140," said Minister Bakir.

The KRG delegation explained to US officials the situation in Khanaqin. Mr Bakir said, "Khanaqin is a city whereby over 90% of its residents are Kurdish. It was peaceful before Prime Minister Maliki decided to send Iraqi forces there. The KRG wants peaceful relations, and I am hopeful about the ongoing talks, but we will not be intimidated through force of arms."

In addition to their meetings with Administration officials, Minister Bakir and Mr Talabany met with many Republican and Democratic members of Congress about the situation in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, and about the Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus, which now number 18 Democrats and Republicans. "Our reception in Congress was outstanding," said Minister Bakir. "The Kurdish-American Caucus is a major achievement for US and Iraqi Kurdistan's relations."

Mr Talabany said, "We formally launched the Caucus only four months ago, in May, during the visit to Washington of Prime Minister Barzani. It has been one of my top priorities as the KRG representative in Washington, and I could not be more pleased with the progress so far. That we now have 18 members in such a short time is testimony to the recognition of our many common values and interests, and also to the deep friendship between the Kurds and the United States."

Minister Bakir also spoke to business leaders at the US Chamber of Commerce on the current investment and political climate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Minister Bakir and Mr Talabany discussed the Region's open

and transparent investment climate, as well as specific sector opportunities for US investors. The Chamber event was held in the context of its business working group dealing with the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, September 18, 2008 5:53 PM
Subject: KRG Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir: The Kurds' Vision of Iraq

The Kurds' Vision of Iraq

Letters to the Editor

The Washington Post

Thursday, September 18, 2008; A20

Regarding the Sept. 13 front-page story "Strip of Iraq 'on the Verge of Exploding' ":

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and its pesh merga forces are not seeking control of the city of Khanaqin. More than 90 percent of the residents of Khanaqin are Kurdish, and the city was peaceful until Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki sent Iraqi military forces there last month in an unwelcome and unnecessary provocation that sparked demonstrations by tens of thousands of residents.

This aggressive act caught the Kurdistan regional leadership by surprise, given that it occurred around the time that the KRG and other Iraqi parties had nearly reached agreement on a provincial election law, a key Iraqi benchmark. Since then, the election law has stalled, and the KRG has negotiated with Baghdad for the redeployment of some Kurdish pesh merga forces, as noted in the article.

The KRG is fully committed to a peaceful, democratic and federal Iraq, but we reject such intimidation from the prime minister.

Furthermore, we are becoming alarmed at the increasingly threatening nationalist rhetoric that some Iraqi Arab parties have directed at the Kurds, which brings back memories of the approach of previous Iraqi governments to the Kurds.

All concerned parties, including U.S. and U.N. negotiators, should respect the Iraqi constitutional process. There has been political progress in Iraq, but it is fragile. The Kurds of Iraq have made vital contributions to Iraq's progress and will continue to do so. Undermining the constitution on the status of Kirkuk, one of the most contentious issues in Iraq, will only weaken Iraq's delicate political compact, which Americans and Kurds have worked hard to achieve.

FALAH MUSTAFA BAKIR
Minister, Department of Foreign Relations
Kurdistan Regional Government
Irbil, Iraq

This letter can found at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/17/AR2008091703065.html>

This letter can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, September 19, 2008 11:51 AM
Subject: US Ambassador Crocker, KRG President Barzani: Iraq must never again persecute citizens, Constitution key to outstanding Issues

US Ambassador Crocker, President Barzani: Iraq must never again persecute citizens, Constitution key to outstanding Issues
Kurdistan Region Presidency (KRP.org)

Full transcript of the joint press conference by President Barzani and US Ambassador Crocker in Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region.

17 September 2008

President Barzani: Good morning. I would like to warmly welcome Ambassador Crocker and his accompanying delegation. We held important meetings last night and this morning and we discussed several important issues, including the strategic framework agreement, the provincial elections law, the tensions between the Kurdistan Region and Baghdad, Article 140 [Iraqi constitution], and several other topics. Fortunately, our points of view were very close and we will continue in our efforts to resolve these issues through the political process so that we reach our main goal: the establishment of a democratic and federal Iraq, free from violence and acting in the interests of the people. I once again welcome him. Please...

Ambassador Crocker: Thank you Mr President. It is a real pleasure for me and my colleagues to be back in Kurdistan. The president and I were remembering last night my first visit here which was back in 2001. The first time I had the pleasure of sitting with President Barzani and talking about the future for the Kurdish region and the future for Iraq. We have come a very very long way since those days in 2001. There is clearly much work to be done in the building of a new Iraq. But it is also clear that the situation that people of Iraq face today after the end of regime of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of far better security, better situation today for all Iraqis and specially in the Kurdish region it is far better than it was in the past. As the president noted we talked about the negotiations underway to conclude a bilateral agreement between Iraq and the United States. We have made very good progress; there are still some issues outstanding. The president and I believe that concluding this agreement is very important to establish a sound basis for our future relationship after the end of 2008 and to enable the United States to continue to support the efforts to expand and to strengthen and consolidate security for all Iraqis. We talked about the elections law and agreed that it is important to conclude that law quickly to allow elections to proceed to further strengthen democracy in Iraq. We did talk about some of the current tensions and stressed how important it is that issues and problems when they arise be worked out among the leaders of the new Iraq in a way that guarantees security and stability and that supports democracy and supports the development of a strong democratic federal state because that state based on the Iraqi constitution is the best guarantee for the well being and the security of all Iraq's citizens. So again I appreciate Mr. President the opportunity to be up here with you again. I look forward to our continued close cooperation as we all work together to build a new Iraq that never again allows the problems of the old regime to emerge, that never again allows the persecution of any of its citizens.

What is your view about the borders of the Kurdistan region? What is your policy regarding demands of the Kurdish people to implement article 140?

Ambassador Crocker: well, with respect to the internal border in Iraq including in Kurdistan region, that's what Article 140 is about. We support the implementation of article 140. We think this needs to be done as a

political process in a way that takes into account the concerns and the rights of all the people involved. This has to be an Iraqi process; we and others such as the United Nations are prepared to help and support [this process] on request.

The Iraqi constitution has defined the rights and responsibilities of all, and Iraqi unity depends on the implementation of this constitution. But it seems the central government does not keep its promises to the Kurds. What do you think are the reasons behind this?

President Barzani: No doubt, this is a constitution that was approved by more than 80% of the Iraqi people and this constitution must be respected. We repeat that we are committed to this constitution and we will do all we can to make sure it is implemented. If some people are not committed to this constitution, I think the people of Iraq will respect their choice and the Iraqi officials must respect the will of the majority of the people of Iraq. At the end of the day, the constitution must be implemented.

What is the nature of the agreement between Iraq and the US?

President Barzani: The agreement we are negotiating is intended to establish the basis for our relationship with Iraq after the Security Council resolution expires at the end of the year. It has a number of aspects; it deals with our cooperation in the economic, scientific, cultural, and diplomatic fields as well as security. With respect to security, it is intended to give us the basis that will allow our forces to continue to support security in all of Iraq including in the Kurdish region.

Political consensus in Iraq seems to get worse. What will be the consequences of this? The other question to the Ambassador: we have several major outstanding problems with Baghdad including, implementation of Article 140, Kurdistan Region's share of the Iraqi budget, integration of Kurdish Guard forces with Iraqi army. But we do not hear any clear positions or policies from Washington over any of these issues?

President Barzani: In answer to your question, it is true that the government system in Iraq is based on political consensus. This consensus arrangement is essential for this stage and maybe for future stages. If there are differences, the constitution should be the guide. This is way we insist on the implementation of the constitution. It is natural to have political differences. But we are committed to the constitution and we will always resort to the constitution when we face problems.

Ambassador Crocker: I think the President just gave a very good answer. There is a constitution in Iraq, a constitution that Iraq's leaders including from the Kurdish region worked very hard to agree on. That constitution should be the guide as a constitution is a guide in any democratic state. There are differences and there difficulties surely but using the constitution as guide we believe that Iraq's leaders can find a way to work through these difficulties. It is important that they do because the success of the new Iraq is the guarantee of the well-being and prosperity for all of Iraq's people. As I noted at the outset, for most of the people of Iraq, certainly for this region, things have never been better than they are today. I think it is important that in dealing with difficulties, all of Iraq's leaders and all of Iraq's people, focus not only on the problems that have to be solved, but on the gains that have been achieved and move forward together in a way that protects those gains.

This transcript can also be found at: www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2008 9:53 AM
Subject: Japan holds ceremony to celebrate first Honorary Consul in Erbil

Japan holds ceremony to celebrate first Honorary Consul in Erbil

September 19, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) Government, business and community leaders today welcomed Japan's nomination of its first Honorary Consul in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region. In appointing Mr Azad Bajger the Honorary Consul, Japan has become the 13th country with a diplomatic representation in the Kurdistan Region.

Mr Shoji Ogawa, Japan's newly appointed Ambassador to Iraq who travelled from Baghdad to attend the ceremony said, "I firmly believe that today's step to bring Japan and the Kurdistan Region closer marks an important stride in future relations between all of Iraq and Japan." He complimented the impressive development throughout Erbil and the stability the Region has achieved.

In accepting the post Mr Bajger said, "I look forward to the role of facilitating business and trade in both the private and the public sectors and encouraging exchange initiatives between businessmen and investors. Today's step will help build lucrative markets here in the Kurdistan Region and will increase diplomatic relations between the Kurdistan Region and Japan."

KRG officials at the ceremony included Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations for the KRG. He said, "The KRG congratulates Mr Bajger on his appointment and it wishes Japan and Mr Bajger every success here in Erbil. Our region's stability would not have been possible without the international community, and Japan's own experience in reconstruction as well as their experience in international assistance will bring great benefits to the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq."

Minister Bakir concluded by thanking Japan for their coming to Iraq's aid in 2003 and explained that the KRG looks forward to a long term relationship with Japan and to working closely with Mr Bajger and the Japanese embassy on economic and diplomatic ties.

Japan joins Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Spain, the UK and the US in having a diplomatic presence in the region. KRG officials are hopeful to further expand this list by the end of the year.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, October 06, 2008 3:11 PM
Subject: Kurdistan Regional Government condemns the killing of 15 Turkish Soldiers

Kurdistan Regional Government condemns the killing of 15 Turkish Soldiers

Statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government
4th October 2008

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) denounces the recent PKK attack on Turkish soldiers. Regrettably, late yesterday evening a PKK assault on a Turkish military base in the Shamzina region of southeast Turkey left 15 Turkish soldiers dead.

We condemn this attack and we express our condolences and sorrow to the families of the victims. We believe that such actions greatly hamper the efforts by all sides to build essential stability in the region, so that all parties can live together in peace.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2008 12:52 PM
Subject: KRG strongly condemns PKK attack in Diyarbakir, Turkey

KRG strongly condemns PKK attack in Diyarbakir, Turkey October 9, 2008

Statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government

The Kurdistan Regional Government condemns the latest Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) attack in Diyarbakir, Turkey in the strongest possible terms.

"This violent act by the PKK serves no political purpose and has brought only tragedy to the people of Diyarbakir and throughout Turkey," said Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani. "We have already emphasized that the PKK must lay down its weapons, abandon the armed struggle, and seek a peaceful solution to this problem."

The KRG has always maintained the position that violence will not solve this conflict and has committed itself to the promotion of peace and stability. The KRG has repeatedly called on the PKK to pursue a non-violent course of action.

Prime Minister Barzani has made it clear that such attacks like the one in Diyarbakir only complicate the situation. He said that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq cannot be used as a safe haven by the PKK and the KRG abhors this and other violent attacks.

The KRG considers friendship with its neighbours to be a top priority, and hopes that Wednesday's PKK attack will not derail KRG and Iraqi efforts to build stronger relations with Turkey. Prime Minister Barzani reiterated his and the KRG's commitment to work directly with Turkey on a long-term solution to the PKK and any and all issues in KRG-Iraq-Turkey relations.

The KRG extends its sympathy and condolences to the victims of this attack and to the victim's families.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2008 5:28 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Barzani supports minority representation in Iraqi Provincial Elections Law

Prime Minister Barzani supports minority representation in Iraqi Provincial Elections Law October 10, 2008

Statement by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani **Kurdistan Regional Government**

The Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today said that he fully supports the reinstating of an article in the Provincial Election Law guaranteeing that minorities are represented in Iraqi provincial councils.

Prime Minister Barzani said, “We must assure minority constituents that they will have a representation in our government. In a new Iraq, based on principles of federalism, democracy and pluralism, we must not allow smaller groups of citizens to feel alienated or separated. We must always remember that our government should serve its people and exists to protect their rights and promote their welfare. In the Kurdistan Region, we have been vigilant in protecting the interests of all minorities, which is one reason why citizens of all religions and ethnicities live in peace.”

The Prime Minister added, “The guarantee and protection of minority rights is a moral conviction we share with the international community, and should be the standard for all of Iraq. The Provincial Elections Law and all Iraqi laws should strongly reflect, and never contradict, this essential element of democracy.”

Prime Minister Barzani welcomed the Iraqi Presidency's request to parliament that it reinstate a deleted article that guaranteed provincial council seats for minorities. The Iraqi parliament had passed the Iraqi Provincial Elections law but removed from it the article on minority representation. Provincial elections are expected to take place next year.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 16, 2008 11:30 AM
Subject: KRG statement on forced displacement and violence against Christians in Mosul

KRG statement on forced displacement and violence against Christians in Mosul October 15, 2008

Statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has been closely monitoring the recent abuses being inflicted upon the Christians of Mosul city, which has forced them to abandon their homes and properties and flee to other parts of Iraq. These tragedies are a result of religious fanatics and terrorist groups launching numerous attacks against the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs of the city that have led to property destruction, death and forced deportation of these indigenous people from their ancestral lands.

The KRG has ordered all the KRG ministries, departments and relevant parties to assist and help the victims as much as possible.

Under these circumstances the KRG Council of Ministers has declared:

First, we strongly condemn all acts of harassment, terror and intimidation against the Christian civilians of Mosul city and call upon all relevant authorities of the federal government to both address and put an end to this catastrophe as soon as possible.

We ask that all the displaced Christian citizens be allowed to return to their homes and be compensated for the losses they have endured.

We reiterate our support for the full rights of the Christians in Provincial Councils, under Article 50 of the Provincial Election Law.

Finally, we condemn the malicious efforts of some parties who have unjustly accused groups within the Kurdistan Region of committing these heinous crimes. Such efforts are aimed at tarnishing the Kurdistan people and turning a blind eye on the true culprits. The Kurdistan Regional Government has always been at the forefront of defending the rights of Christians, and continues to be fully devoted to the betterment of their living conditions and securing their rights and general welfare.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 16, 2008 12:24 PM
Subject: KRG PM Barzani and British Minister Rammell discuss progress in Iraq, dialogue with Turkey

PM Barzani and British Minister Rammell discuss progress in Iraq, dialogue with Turkey October 15, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) - Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and senior Kurdistan Regional Government officials welcomed Mr Bill Rammell, the British Minister of State for the Middle East, to Erbil this week in his first overseas trip since his appointment as minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office earlier this month.

Prime Minister Barzani and Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah welcomed Mr Rammell, who was accompanied by Ambassador Christopher Prentice. They discussed a wide range of issues, including bilateral relations, the federal process in Iraq, the strategic agreement between Iraq the US and the UK, Article 140 of the Constitution, the provincial election and hydrocarbon laws, relations between the KRG and the federal government, the issue of the PKK and Turkey and the diplomatic talks beginning in Baghdad, and the recent tragedies of Christians being targeted in Mosul.

In a joint press conference following the meeting, Prime Minister Barzani and Mr Rammell emphasised the importance of a strategic agreement between Iraq and the US. Mr Rammell said, “Reaching an agreement, which would include the UK, is vital and would be a better solution than trying to extend the UN mandate in place.”

The minister congratulated the KRG on the talks that Mr Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region, commenced with Turkey and the federal government in Baghdad concerning the PKK, adding that the UK “is very pleased that such dialogue is taking place.” Prime Minister Barzani said, “We want to have strong and positive relations with our neighbours. There is no military solution to this problem, and we are glad talks have started.”

At the press conference, Prime Minister Barzani strongly condemned the targeting of Assyrian Christians in and around Mosul by extremists. He said, “These attacks must cease and Iraq must follow the principles of religious freedom that have been established within the Kurdistan Region.” In answer to a question from the press, Mr Rammell commented that the UK is not persuaded by the idea of creating a Christian safe-haven because “it is of crucial importance for all Iraq to support the worshipping of all faiths.”

Mr Rammell visited the region to further build relations with the Kurdistan Region and Iraq as well as to emphasise Britain's commitment to a successful and self-sustaining Iraq. He told reporters, “We in the United Kingdom are long standing friends with this part of the world. Prime Minister Barzani and I have had a productive discussion and I look forward to continuing the friendship between Britain and the Kurdistan Region.”

Prime Minister Barzani warmly welcomed the minister and said, “Such visits clearly show the importance of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region to the United Kingdom.”

KRG officials attending the meeting with Mr Rammell and the ambassador were Minister of State for the Interior Mr Karim Sinjari; Dr Ashti Hawrami, Minister for Natural Resources; Dr Mohammad Ihsan, Minister

for Extra-Regional Affairs; Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, Minister and Head of Department of Foreign Relations; and Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, High Representative to the UK.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2008 11:02 AM
Subject: Kurdistan Region Presidency (KRP) statement on Mosul attacks against Christians

KRP Statement on Mosul Attacks against Christians

1 November 2008

Press Release

The Kurdistan Region Presidency (KRP) strongly rejects any insinuation that Kurdish authorities are neglecting the seriousness of attacks against the Christian community in Mosul, Iraq, which lies outside of the Kurdistan Region.

The KRP has a proven history of acknowledging the important role that Iraqi Christian groups play in the Kurdistan Region, leading many Christians to flee violence in the rest of the Iraq for the safe haven offered them in the Kurdistan Region. However, while Christians in the Kurdistan Region have enjoyed the peace and security offered to all our people, it is a fact that the city of Mosul and surrounding areas where recent attacks on Christians have taken place is a hotbed for terrorist activities. Unfortunately, terrorists in Mosul have successfully claimed victims from nearly all Iraqi social groups, including Arabs, Kurds, Yezidi Kurds, Christians, and Turkomen.

Top Coalition officials have repeatedly acknowledged Mosul as the last haven for the detestable terrorism that once plagued Iraq. When attacks against Christians began, Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani immediately promised to send aid in a variety of forms in order to ensure those fleeing the danger would be as comfortable as possible in these difficult times and welcomed those forced from their homes into the safety of the Kurdistan Region.

The KRP is fully, unwaveringly committed to an Iraq where minority groups never have to fear their own state. Having suffered through the genocidal campaigns of the former Ba'athist regime, the Kurds of Iraq are determined to never allow such atrocities to be perpetrated against their fellow citizens again. Iraqi Christians are an indispensable part of Iraq's social fabric and hold critical roles in politics, business, and civil society in the Kurdistan Region. Any insinuation that the government of the Kurdistan Region would overlook violence against this invaluable community is ludicrous and nonsensical.

This fact was acknowledged recently by Bishop Raban of St. Joseph's Church in Ainkawa, Iraq, who strongly denounced these accusations and stated, "Allegations that Kurds are behind the attacks on Christians in Mosul are nonsensical. We Christians live in peace and harmony with our fellow Kurds in Kurdistan."

Entire Christian communities driven by terrorist attacks in places like Basra and Baghdad have been freely reconstructed in the Kurdistan Region. While churches are being attacked and destroyed in other parts of Iraq, many churches have been constructed in the Kurdistan Region and just outside the capital of the Region, the predominantly Christian community of Ainkawa has grown exponentially. President Barzani is determined to see this community continue to flourish and will continue his unwavering support for minority rights in the new Iraq. Terrorist attacks aimed at any group will not be tolerated or allowed to drive a wedge between those communities bravely committed to a tolerant, pluralistic Iraq. This is the future that the KRP and its officials are determined to protect.

Over the last 5 years, more than 2,000 Christian families have fled Mosul to safe areas under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). More than 20,000 Kurdish families from Mosul and surrounding areas have likewise been forced to flee other parts of Iraq for the peaceful and prosperous Kurdistan Region. In addition to Christians, around 2,750 Kurds and more than 700 Yezidi Kurds have been killed by terrorists in the Mosul area.

This statement can also be found at: www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 05, 2008 5:20 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani interview about the attacks on the Iraqi Christian community

Interview: Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani speaks to KRG.org about the attacks on the Iraqi Christian community
November 5, 2008

KRG.org: Despite significant gains in the security field, Iraq remains a dangerous place. While religious and ethnic tensions have lessened in key areas, the recent brutal attacks against Christians in Mosul remind us that violence and repression are not far from the surface. What is the background of the current situation of Christians in Iraq and the position of the Kurdistan Regional Government?

Prime Minister Barzani: There is an unfortunate history of attacks against Christians in Iraq by terrorist groups since the liberation of Iraq in 2003. For example, in August 2004, churches in Baghdad and later in Basra, Mosul and Kirkuk were targeted by terrorists. Christians were assassinated, abducted, and pressured to convert or pay ransom.

Such things continued until nearly 50,000 Christian families had no option but to flee. Of these, 20,000 families fled to the Kurdistan Region and settled in the Dohuk and Erbil Governorates. Other families settled in the towns around the Nineveh Plain, and the remainder left Iraq for Syria and Jordan.

The Kurdistan Regional Government has provided as much assistance as possible to these Christian families. This assistance has included employing them within the Kurdistan Regional Government, reconstructing approximately 100 villages, and helping around 10,000 families with monthly stipends. The KRG has been helping Christian families with assistance through churches and cultural and community centers.

When the exodus of Christians became known, the Kurdistan Regional Government allocated 250,000 ID to each family to help them until the federal government in Baghdad can find a permanent solution. Other Kurdistan Regional Government institutions, like the Parliament and the governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, have also offered financial and material aid to those in need, through churches and civil society organizations.

The KRG Council of Ministers convened to condemn attacks against the Christians. Even before this, many KRG cabinet members, parliamentarians, and governors visited locations to where the displaced Christian families have fled.

KRG.org: How strong has been the support of the KRG for the Christians?

Prime Minister Barzani: The Kurdistan Region has offered full support at a time when it has been chiefly the federal government's responsibility to do so. We have done this in the past and we will continue to do so in the future. No one else in Iraq has offered this level of assistance to Iraq's Christians, who were amongst the very first to have lived in this land.

The Kurdistan Regional Government has taken these actions based on feelings of brotherhood and out of responsibility as a constitutionally-recognized federal region of Iraq. We consider it a political and moral obligation to assist these displaced families and to work with the federal government to end terrorism against

the Christian community.

KRG.org: What is the current situation in Mosul, and what has been the recent role and response of the Kurdistan Regional Government?

Prime Minister Barzani: The terrorists who have been behind the targeting and displacement of Christians throughout Iraq have continued and extended their campaign of terror in Mosul. The Christians who have fled Mosul are not from only one or two districts in Mosul city, they are also from 52 separate districts in the surrounding area. There have been many victims in Mosul. Thousands of Kurds were killed there because of their ethnicity, and thousands of families have been displaced as a result.

The city of Mosul has today become a safe-haven for many terrorist organizations and some lingering members of the former Ba'ath regime. The so called "Islamist State," for example, has become an umbrella association under which all these terrorists operate. It is true that most of the members are Arabs, but the groups consist of Turkomans and Kurds too.

Additionally there are even Christians who are former members of the Ba'ath party, now calling themselves the Resistance, who actively fight against the current governments and Coalition Forces. The terrorists have recruited support from a mix of ethnic and religious groups in an effort to sow doubt, fear and tension among the people of Mosul. This is a classic terrorist tactic.

KRG.org: Has the Kurdistan Regional Government's position and response been fully understood?

Prime Minister Barzani: There is much misunderstanding of what has happened recently in Mosul, including the role of the Kurdistan Regional Government. When Christians have fled Mosul city because of threat of violence, only the KRG has offered support.

The federal government in Baghdad has done little to nothing for these displaced people, beyond spreading rumors and visiting some locations in the Nineveh Plain where some Christians have taken refuge. We have always maintained that these displaced persons have the right to return to their homes, and this should be our long-term goal.

KRG.org: Is there a connection between the terrorist actions against Christians and terrorism/agitation against Iraq's Kurds?

Prime Minister Barzani: This is an important question that has not been properly addressed in many reports and analyses of the current situation. We in the Kurdistan Region, especially in Erbil city, have been the target of several terrorist acts including the February 1st, 2004 twin attacks that took 98 lives - including governmental and party officials and civilians - while injuring countless more. The bombing was carried out by Arabs, but we know they were assisted in the planning by Kurds in Mosul associated with the group Ansar al-Sunna. Many people know that even today a small number of Kurds who worked with the Ba'ath regime are still active and helping the terrorists.

With so many areas affected, this issue must be analyzed in order to determine who could benefit from the Christians being targeted. In terms of Kurdish national interests, the presence of the Yazidi and Shabak Kurds and Christians within Mosul city is important for the population proportion equations of the coming provincial elections. In this case, could it possibly be logical for the Kurds to try to decrease the number of Christian in the city and give the Arab population the majority?

Those who accused the Kurds of driving the Christians and others out of Mosul are the same people who earlier accused the Kurds of expansionist policy in Mosul and other areas. Now the accusers have completely changed

their assertions, saying that the Kurds are driving the Christians and Yazidi and Shabak Kurds out.

The Kurds would politically lose most from these incidents, since the Arab proportion of the population would rise. Those wishing to lay the blame for these incidents on our doorstep are enemies of democracy, enemies of a federal Iraq. They wish to make blatantly false claims in order to undermine the basic rights of freedom, democracy, and fair representation.

KRG.org: What is your view on the Christian community?

Prime Minister Barzani: I consider the Christian community to be a peaceful and a professional one. The Christians are not a threat to anyone, and we do not see them as a threat. We are proud of the culture of tolerance that has been promulgated in the Kurdistan Region. Our ability to live in peaceful coexistence with an ethnically and religiously diverse constituency is a great strength.

I would ask the following: if it is the Kurds who are driving these unfortunate victims out of Mosul, why would the displaced Christians seek sanctuary and safety inside the Kurdistan Region? If these outrageous allegations were true, would anyone expect the Christians to flee into the arms of the very people who are allegedly persecuting them?

The reality is that the KRG is the only governmental organization in Iraq currently doing anything meaningful to help these threatened people. Despite our efforts, we still find ourselves the victims of a political campaign. We will stand up to the absurd, shadowy allegations that we are somehow behind the violence against our Christian brothers.

The Kurdistan Region is home to a large and peaceful Christian community. Our Christian brothers are welcome here - they participate in our government, our society and our economy. They are as much a part of Kurdish history as the many other ethnic and religious groups that live here in peace and harmony. They enrich our lives, our society and our culture. We have done a great deal for the Christian minority in our Region, and we have done this out of moral conviction. We see this as our duty as governmental authorities.

We have committed ourselves to the creation of a federal, democratic, pluralistic Iraq. This means that we are all responsible for respecting the rights of ethnic minorities throughout the nation. In our Region, the reality on the ground demonstrates our respect for diversity and our commitment to human rights. The KRG warmly welcome and strongly encourage everyone to come to the Region and see this for themselves. And I hope one day all the people of Iraq will feel that their rights and freedoms are protected as they are in the Kurdistan Region.

This interview can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Holding, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, November 06, 2008 1:18 PM
Subject: KRG congratulates President-elect Barack Obama

KRG congratulates President-elect Barack Obama

November 6, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – The Kurdistan Regional Government congratulates Senators Barack Obama and Joseph Biden on their election as the next President and Vice President of the United States. We join America and nations and people from around the world in hailing this historic election.

The next Administration, like the present one, can continue to count on the partnership of the Kurdistan Regional Government to bring progress to Iraq. The Kurdistan Region remains America's best friend and ally in support of a democratic, federal Iraq. We are proud to have fought side-by-side with American and coalition forces to remove a tyrannical dictator.

We deeply appreciate the many sacrifices of the US military and the American people in Iraq. No American soldier or civilian has been killed or wounded since the liberation of Iraq in 2003. And all the while, we have demonstrated that a democracy based on human rights and economic opportunity can thrive in the Middle East.

The Bush and Obama Administrations, and the present and future US Congress, can be assured that we will remain resolute in our efforts to finalize a strategic framework agreement between Iraq and the United States. We will also continue working with our partners in Baghdad to pass a hydrocarbons and revenue sharing law, guided by our nation's constitution. Furthermore, we will embrace opportunities for a strategic dialogue with the Obama-Biden Administration regarding its Iraq policy and to better understand the unique needs and potential of Iraq's Kurdistan Region.

We offer a warm acknowledgment to Senator John McCain, an American hero and long time friend to Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, and our most sincere congratulations to President-elect Obama. And as always, we offer our best wishes to the people of the United States of America.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 12, 2008 3:18 PM
Subject: KRG President Masoud Barzani in Wall Street Journal: Kurdistan is a model for Iraq

Kurdistan Is a Model for Iraq

Our path to a secular, federal democracy is inspired by the U.S.

The Wall Street Journal

Opinion

November 12, 2008

By MASOUD BARZANI

Iraq's Kurds have consistently been America's closest allies in Iraq. Our Peshmerga forces fought alongside the U.S. military to liberate the country, suffering more casualties than any other U.S. ally.

And while some Iraqi politicians have challenged the U.S.-Iraq security agreement, Iraq's Kurdish leaders have endorsed the pact as essential for U.S. combat troops to continue fighting terrorists in Iraq.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is committed to a federal, democratic Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors.

We have benefited enormously from the service and sacrifices of America's armed forces and their families, and we are deeply grateful. We are also proud to have shared in such sacrifices; my brother was among those severely wounded during the liberation of Iraq.

Last year, following a U.S. request, we deployed Kurdish troops to Baghdad. These troops played a decisive role in the success of the surge. Last month I once again visited Baghdad to meet with the leadership of the federal government. We stressed our commitment to developing an Iraqi state that abides by its constitution and that is based upon a federal model with clearly delineated powers for its regions.

In spite of all this, some commentators now suggest that the Kurds are causing problems by insisting on territorial demands and proceeding with the development of Kurdistan's oil resources. These allegations are troubling. We are proceeding entirely in accord with the Iraqi constitution, implementing provisions that were brokered by the U.S.

In the constitutional negotiations that took place in the summer of 2005, two issues were critical to us: first, that the Kurdistan Region has the right to develop the oil on its territory, and second, that there be a fair process to determine the administrative borders of Iraq's Kurdistan Region -- thus resolving once and for all the issue of "disputed" territories.

Unfortunately, ever since the discovery of oil in Iraq in the 1920s, successive Iraqi governments have sought to keep oil out of Kurdish hands, blocking exploration and development of fields in Kurdistan. Saddam Hussein's government went even further, using Iraqi oil revenues to finance the military campaigns that destroyed more than 4,500 Kurdish villages and to pay for the poison gas used to kill thousands of Kurdish civilians.

The Kurdish leadership agreed to a U.S.-sponsored compromise in 2005 in which the central government would have the authority to manage existing oil fields, but new fields would fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the regions. Since then, the KRG has taken the lead with Baghdad in negotiations on a hydrocarbon law that is

faithful to Iraq's constitution and is conducive to modernizing Iraq's oil infrastructure and substantially increasing its oil production.

We have awarded contracts for foreign oil companies (including some American ones) to explore our territory. In so doing, Kurdistan is not threatening the unity of Iraq. It is simply implementing the constitution.

The "disputed territories" have a tragic history. Since the 1950s, Iraqi regimes encouraged Arabs to settle in Kirkuk and other predominantly Kurdish and Turkmen areas. Saddam Hussein accelerated this process by engaging in ethnic cleansing, expelling or killing Kurds and Turkmen, or by requiring nationality corrections (in which non-Arabs are forced to declare themselves to be Arabs) and by moving Arabs into Kurdish homes.

The dispute between Baghdad and the Kurds over Kirkuk has lasted more than 80 years and has often been violent. All sides have now agreed to a formula to resolve the problem, to bring justice to Kirkuk, and to correct the crimes against Kurds committed by Saddam Hussein's regime. Iraq's constitution requires that a referendum be held in disputed territories to determine if their populations want to join the Kurdistan Region. Conducting a plebiscite is not easy, but it is preferable to another 80 years of conflict.

If the pro-Kurdistan side should lose the referendum in Kirkuk, I promise that Kurdistan will respect that result. And if they win, I promise that we will do everything in our power to ensure outsized representation of Kirkuk's Turkmen, Arabs and Christians both on the local level and in the parliament and government of the Kurdistan Region.

Regional stability cannot come from resolving internal disputes alone. That is why expanding and deepening our ties with Turkey is my top priority.

My meeting last month in Baghdad with the Turkish special envoy to Iraq was a historic and positive development. There should be further direct contacts between the KRG and Turkey, as well as multilateral contacts that involve the U.S. We are eager to work with Turkey to seek increased peace and prosperity in the region.

I am proud that the Kurdistan Region is both a model and gateway for the rest of Iraq. Our difficult path to a secular, federal democracy is very much inspired by the U.S. And so we look forward to working with the Obama-Biden administration to support and defend our hard-fought successes in Iraq, and to remain proud of what the Kurdistan region is today: a thriving civil society in the heart of the Middle East. When we insist on strict compliance with our country's constitution, we are only following America's great example.

Mr. Barzani is the president of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

This op-ed can be found at: <http://s.wsj.net/article/SB122645258001119425.html>

This op-ed can also be found at: www.krg.org and www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, November 18, 2008 4:35 PM
Subject: KRG to launch campaign to promote equality and end violence against women

KRG to launch campaign to promote equality and end violence against women

November 16, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) – The Kurdistan Regional Government is launching a week-long campaign to combat violence against women under the slogan of 'Yes to gender equality, no to violence' from November 19 to 25.

The campaign is part of the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) policy to achieve gender equality and build a harmonious, modern society in which the rights of all individuals are respected.

The campaign is supported and overseen by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in coordination with the Kurdistan National Assembly (parliament), government ministries, civil society organisations and media outlets, with the aim of taking further steps to prevent violence against women in the Kurdistan Region.

In launching the campaign, the KRG has called upon intellectuals, writers, public figures, human rights activists, women's rights leaders, legal experts, religious clerics, university professors and civil society organisations to participate in the campaign and to contribute to this cause.

The KRG sees the week-long campaign as an opportunity to increase awareness among the public of the cultural and legal aspects of this issue in order to ensure a bright future for the women of the Region and for society as a whole.

At the end of the campaign there will be a ceremony to honour those individuals and organisations most active in advocating the rights of women and advancing this policy.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, November 24, 2008 6:01 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Barzani and Turkish MPs attend the opening of Ishik University in Erbil

Prime Minister Barzani and Turkish MPs attend the opening of Ishik University in Erbil

November 22, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan Region – Iraq (KRG.org) – Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, several Turkish Members of Parliament, and Turkey's Consul General to Mosul along with Kurdistan Regional Government and other officials attended the opening of Ishik University, a private Turkish university in Erbil.

Prime Minister Barzani said that he considers the university, which is affiliated with the Fezalar Education Consortium, to be of great importance to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. "I hope that Ishik University will become a centre where both the academic aspirations of our students and the aspirations of our government for a strong relationship with Turkey are realised."

The Prime Minister's administration has stressed education as a strategic aspect of capacity development in the Kurdistan Region. "Today we are preparing the establishment of a progressive and advanced society. Therefore we are trying hard to prepare thousands of our young people in the fields of foreign language, engineering, medicine, technical and computer sciences and other scientific fields, while also creating a new focus on the increase in skills which will support private sector development."

The Prime Minister also commented on the good progress being made in relations between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Turkey, noting that the relationship is being built on a strong foundation of understanding, cooperation and growing trust.

Turkey's Consul General Mr Ahmed Yildiz read a congratulatory letter from Turkey's Foreign Minister marking the inauguration of Ishik. Mr. Yildiz said he is hopeful about the future relationship, and explained the value of cooperation in educational and commercial fields.

Ishik University President Salih Hoshoglu opened the ceremony. "Ishik University will promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. We can work together in our study of scientific programmes." He explained that there would be four principle colleges in the university, all taught in English: an IT college, a college of administration and economics, and a college for mathematics and education. In addition, evening classes will be available for courses in English, computer science and business administration.

Preparations are underway to open a humanities college as well. Currently 450 students have been accepted, and enrolment is continuing.

Mr Huseyin Chalik, Turkey's General Director of Higher Education, and these Members of Turkey's Parliament attended the ceremony: Vahit Kirishchi, Selahattin Aydin, Ibrahim Hasgur, Halil Mazicioglu and Abdulhadi Kahya. Former MPs Cavit Torun, Galip Ensarioglu and Hashim Hashimi were also present.

PM's speech at opening of Ishik University in Erbil

Erbil, 22 November 2008

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, good day to you all and welcome.

I would like to very warmly welcome Turkey's Members of Parliament and Turkey's Consul General to Mosul, as well as all those guests who have come from Turkey. We are delighted that you are here today.

I am pleased and privileged today to participate with you in this opening ceremony of the private Ishik University in Erbil. This is another encouraging step in the field of education in the Region.

The opening of this university today is an important event in the developmental process of education in the Region, as well as being helpful to the political process. The opening of this university signifies the building of another bridge in our relations that will take us towards the right approach.

At the same time it paves the way for the implementation of the policies we have initiated to expand our relations with our neighbours, including Turkey, other countries in the Middle East and countries throughout the world.

If you would allow me, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin by making a few points about the state of higher education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In looking at the number of students today, we can see that we have more students in colleges and universities than at any other time in our history.

Our classes are full of bright and talented youth at all levels, and they will soon take on important responsibilities in our society, both in the public and private sectors.

Today we are preparing the establishment of a progressive and advanced society. Therefore we are trying hard to prepare thousands of our young people in the fields of foreign languages, engineering, medicine, technical and computer sciences and other sciences.

We ask for further participation from students and teachers in this educational process, and we ask them to pay attention to the needs of the region.

At the same time, we request that students carry a strong sense of responsibility and seriousness in the education process and in building and securing their future and the future of our people.

We in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) try to provide a conducive environment that provides suitable professional opportunities, based on the need for such positions. The basis for such employment after graduation from university should be competence and experience.

It is true that government service is a noble undertaking. We know that this service is a source of pride, and those governmental employees have the right to look to the future with pride, particularly because many have contributed to government efforts during our most difficult times.

But we have to bear in mind that we should not expect all university graduates to be appointed to government positions each year.

There are many cases in which new graduates enter the civil service and become part of our government work force. But at the same time we want graduates to rely on the private sector and on the business community. And we want the private sector to be capable of providing suitable work opportunities for our young people.

Here I would like to state that it is our duty to provide proper opportunities and to develop the private sector and enhance investment. And in this regard much work has been done; for example, through the passage of the Investment Law and the establishment of the Investment Board.

Therefore our eyes are focused on the private sector, so that they can feel responsible at this stage and join us in providing the needed opportunities for university graduates, helping them become part of a dynamic and capable work force in the private sector.

We in the KRG have stated in the past, and I will state with conviction now, that we want the private sector to be the engine of our economic development. The public and private sectors must be complementary and strengthen each other.

Higher education has a key role to play here, in presenting a suitable learning environment and making available the necessary education for university students. This can be done through training courses that can guarantee success in a student's chosen field in the private sector.

For example, there may now be some training courses on management and administration. But we need more attention to be paid to preparing university graduates for the fields of banking, accounting, auditing, finance, marketing, production, investment promotion and managerial processes, and in addition, information technology.

We all know that we have shortcomings in those fields. I regret to say that our education system has not yet reached the level we wish it to achieve. True, there has been some progress, but it is not as substantial as it should be. For this reason we must all put forth a concerted effort to improve and to help overcome in our shortcomings.

We want to see fundamental changes in the education process. When we talk about change, we mean changing the style and method of education, the programmes, and updating and renewing the system in a way that matches global progress and international technology, as well as the needs of our government and our communities.

There are many occasions when foreign companies come to the Kurdistan Region, and they need experienced and capable staff in administration and finance. As they are not able to find such expertise and skills in the Region, unfortunately they are obliged to bring foreigners from abroad for expertise.

Therefore we all must try to nurture and prepare a capable, experienced and talented work force right here in the Region, so that they are able to participate within the framework of today's global market, a highly competitive market. This will allow graduates to secure reliable and quality employment and improve their lives and the lives of their families.

Here I would like to say that the Fezalar Company has been providing its educational services in the region since 1994. And I am pleased to see that Ishik University has paid attention to the development of our most important sectors that I mentioned earlier and that are needed in the Kurdistan Region; especially in the fields of management, administration and computer engineering - and further, that the courses in this university are conducted in the English language.

Therefore I would kindly request the President of the University and faculty members to promote this special training faithfully with us, so that they play a leading role in the preparation and development of a generation of future leaders in both the public and private sector, in order to advance our Region.

This project will be a source of support in addressing the current issues that we face in higher education and education in general throughout the Region. A particular issue with which we are dealing is the lack of space in universities for high school graduates. We very much hope that we will be able to find a suitable solution to this problem.

But we have to remember that our students should look at the educational process seriously and focus their attention on this process in order to gain a high level of understanding. Today the world has changed and our community has to work hard to participate in the global market in order to compete with other advanced societies.

I would also like say a few words about the importance of this university opening in Erbil as a symbol of and a hope for a deepening relationship between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and our neighbour, Turkey.

We all know that there is a long history of relations with Turkey, dating back many years. If we look at the history of our relationship carefully, we will see that it has seen its ups and downs. But I am pleased today to tell you, with conviction, that we are approaching a new stage in our relationship.

We always want to build friendly relations with all countries of the world. Turkey, as a well-situated neighbouring country is important to us.

I am confident that the future of our relationship is a bright and positive one. Our understanding of one another's views and visions are an encouraging factor in the establishment of this relationship politically, economically, socially, culturally and educationally.

I believe that the people and the government of Turkey desire the same relationship and goal. And if we both work with the same spirit and pursue the same objective, I am optimistic about the outcome of the efforts made in this regard. At the same time, we want the media and news outlets from both sides to be cooperative in strengthening this relationship.

We understand the concerns of our neighbour Turkey, and they have a better understanding of our position, and also the challenges facing us. Our position is clear. We are for normal and good neighbourly relations with Turkey.

We are confident that our future ties with Turkey can be built on a strong foundation for the future, based on four pillars:

1. Growing mutual economic benefit through commercial activities and the promotion of investment in the Kurdistan Region.
2. Enhanced dialogue and earnest cooperation in understanding the realities of the situation, and the building of mutual confidence and trust.
3. Respecting each other and assuring non-interference in internal affairs, while at the same time respecting border security concerns and national sovereignty.
4. Increased understanding of the realities on the ground, and respect for the unique political circumstances on each side through our full confidence in the peaceful settlement of key issues.

We have much to do in order to strengthen relations with Turkey. We have to remember that it was only in recent months that we entered the phase of rapprochement and the initiation of dialogue. But I would also like to say that all signs are positive and encourage successful dialogue.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq desires the establishment and advancement of very good relations with Turkey in all aspects, as friends, neighbours, and main partners in economic and commercial activity. This applies not only for the Kurdistan Region, but for all of Iraq.

The establishment of Ishik University is a step that advances these relations, while at the same time serving as an academic and intellectual centre. We can promote open and public dialogue by inviting intellectuals and educators from both sides to the campus.

And this project will be a factor to allay the potential lack of trust between the two sides, and also to bring forth a realistic understanding in the intentions and objectives of both neighbouring peoples, in the interest of both sides. We consider dialogue as the optimal solution for all issues and misunderstandings. Better understanding must continue on both sides.

We all know that universities are places that are filled with promise and hope for the future and are helpful in realising the dreams of our youth. It is clear that the talents and capabilities of our young people develop in the university, and they pursue their aspirations by attending the university.

I hope that Ishik University will become the centre where both the academic aspirations of our students and our government's aspirations for a good and strong relationship with Turkey are realised.

I would like to reiterate the KRG's full support of this and similar projects, and stress that the KRG will continue to support such projects in the future, within the framework of our attention to the education sector and increasing services for the people of the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq.

Again I would like to thank and commend you all for your efforts. I thank each and every individual participating in this important project. I commend all of you who stayed with and continued to support us since 1994, through the difficult times. My thanks go to the President of the University and to the Board of Trustees for their strong support for this project.

Thank you very much.

This article and speech can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 26, 2008 11:28 AM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister and Iraqi Oil Minister agree on several oil issues

KRG Prime Minister and Iraqi Oil Minister agree on several oil issues

November 26, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan Region – Iraq (KRG.org) – Prime Minister Nechiravan Barzani and Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani met Monday in the Kurdistan Region to discuss issues surrounding oil and Iraq's national oil policy.

The Kurdistan Region's Prime Minister Barzani, Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah and Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami met the Iraqi Oil Minister before holding a joint press conference where they told reporters they had reached agreement on "the basic principle that oil remains for all the Iraqi people". They said they also agreed to take steps to link two oilfields in the Kurdistan Region to Iraq's northern pipeline and to continue talks.

Prime Minister Barzani said, "The Kurdistan Regional Government [KRG] still believes that all differences can be resolved through dialogue and consultation. Today's meeting between the KRG and Minister al-Shahristani was fruitful and should be seen as an important step in a continuous process. We hope that such dialogue continues and that the Iraqi Council of Representatives can pass a national oil law that benefits and respects the federal rights of all Iraqis."

When asked about a national oil law, Mr al-Shahristani said, "The Iraqi Council of Representatives has been unable to pass a national oil and gas law because of a lack of consensus among the political parties." He later added, "The February 2007 draft law will be a good base for a hydrocarbon law in Iraq which will benefit Iraqis across the country."

Mr Barzani and Mr al-Shahristani announced that both sides would prepare for the future joining of two oilfields, Tawke and Taqtaq in the Kurdistan Region, to the main northern export pipeline to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. They stated however that further talks would be needed before national export licenses would be assigned to the fields.

The visiting minister said that a top priority was the development of the Khurmala oilfield, located south of Erbil city, in order to supply a refinery in the Erbil governorate. The two sides agreed that the KRG and Baghdad will continue to cooperate in this regard. Prime Minister Barzani said, "There was a problem in the past regarding this field and today we have solved it."

Prime Minister Barzani ended the news conference by answering unfounded allegations. He said, "Oil belongs to all the people of Iraq and we in the Kurdistan Region have never secretly sold oil outside of Iraq's borders."

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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